

How the United States Has Revolutionized Porto Rico

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER,
Washington, D. C.

UNCLE SAM'S greatest victory in the world was to do with a worm. I have written how he has raised the island from beggary to prosperity, and how his foreign trade has been multiplied 100 per cent. How the wealth of the people has risen from almost nothing to \$1,000 per family, and how they are now growing rich off of coffee, tobacco and sugar. Further on in this letter I will tell how mountain trails have been changed to stone roads, and how justice and good government have taken the place of disorder and graft.

Uncle Sam's fight with the worm has been bigger than any of these. And still the worm is so small that you could lay it on the little finger of your baby and it would just reach around the edge where the nail is joined to the flesh. Nevertheless at the time he took hold of the island it was sucking the life and strength out of 50 per cent of the people. Almost every one had it. I did not know what was the matter. We thought the Porto Ricans were a degenerate nation, and that their pasty, pale skins, flabby muscles and lackadaisical ways were hereditary and could not be changed. It was some time before we discovered that they were naturally as strong as we are, and that their weakness existed because they were sick. It all came from this little worm which was gnawing their vitals.

Dr. Ashford Discovers the Hookworm.
The presence of the parasite was discovered in 1896 by Major Bailey K. Ashford, a United States army surgeon, and since then a great fight has gone on against it, resulting in the cure of hundreds of thousands and in continuing its ravages to the poorest classes of laborers who are far off in the mountains.

The discovery of this worm in Porto Rico led to our knowledge of it in the Southern States, and to the great hookworm experiments which have been taken under the Rockefeller fund to control it.

The first active hookworm campaign, however, was undertaken by Major Ashford in Porto Rico, and to-day there are forty-five dispensaries scattered over the island to which such patients come to be treated. During the past year 45,000 men, women and children have been treated at these dispensaries, and of them 19,000 have been completely cured and 7,000 more are still improving under treatment. In all the island more than 300,000 have been treated, and the hookworm has been practically wiped out of the towns and villages.

The Deadly Hookworm.
It is due to the work in Porto Rico that we now know all about the hookworm and how to control it. It is believed to have been brought there from Africa at the time the first slaves were imported. It is known to have existed among the African pygmies, and it is thought to have come to Porto Rico in 1539, with the founding of the first three sugar plantations. The worm began its work in the lowlands and gradually made its way through the island. It is now strongest in the mountains, and it is found almost everywhere on the coffee estates.

The hookworm comes from an egg which hatches out in the earth twenty-four hours after it is laid. It is said to never hatch anywhere else than in the earth, and it is the worm itself that crawls into the body of the man. It often gets in through the feet. The most of the Porto Rican laborers go barefooted, and during the rainy season, when the ground is wet and damp, a scratch or sore on the skin enables the parasite to crawl in. A poor state of health makes its ravages easy. There was a great increase of the disease after the hurricane of 1899, at which time thousands were practically starving and the diet of the people was low.

The entrance of the worm through the skin has been prevented by persuading the people to wear shoes and wash out for their feet during wet weather. In many of the rural districts the sanitary conditions are still bad and parts of the country are peppered with the worms and their eggs. One can easily tell the men, women and children who are being eaten up by these parasites. They look weak, pale, dull and flabby, and it is almost impossible for them to do more than half work. Most of them are afflicted with nausea, vomiting, headaches and palpitation of the heart, and with some these symptoms continue for years, while others gradually fade away and die.

But let me tell you how the worm works. The doctors say it feeds on the red corpuscles of the blood. This is the life-giving fluid, and a good healthy man ought to have five or six millions of them in every cubic millimeter of all the blood that flows through his veins. Not long ago, I had as much as I was far under par, I had

only one million. A doctor

jabbed a pin into my ear and took out a drop of my blood and tested it. He found that there were over five million red corpuscles per cubic, and even this number made him shake his head and look serious. Now the Porto Ricans with the hookworm have only two and one-half million of these red corpuscles, so you can see where he stands. Another part of my test was as to the hemoglobin, which also relates to the quality of this blood. If the test rises to 100 per cent, it is excellent. My test showed 82, and now after treatment it has risen to ninety. The average Porto Rican with the worm has only 40 per cent of that stuff in him, and nevertheless upon such a physical condition he has had to labor from daylight to dark on the sugar estates and in the coffee plantations. He has been a sick man all the time, but he has had to work. The curing of hundreds of thousands of such people is a part of what Uncle Sam has done in Porto Rico.

A Sanitary Island.

Indeed, the present plans of the government are such that the island is now about as sanitary as any part of Latin America. At the time we took hold, the death rate was about forty per thousand. It is now only twenty-two per thousand, and this compares favorably with any other similarly populated country.

We have practically wiped out the smallpox. When I visited the island twelve years ago it was raging, and at that time our government undertook the greatest vaccination job of all history. It had the army start to work to vaccinate the whole people. There were at least 50,000 sore arms on the island during my stay, and the people were so disabled in places that the work practically stopped. Among the places I visited was a vaccine farm, where the army surgeons had 2,000 cattle, ranging from eight months to a year old. They used these to get vaccine matter, taking as many as 2,000 points from a single beast. Since then the vaccination has kept up from time to time. Twenty-six thousand persons were vaccinated last year, and the doctors keep their eyes on the children. As a result, there is no smallpox in Porto Rico, and very few cases of varioloid.

The Water Supply.

At the time we took charge the water supply was bad almost everywhere. The streams were used as public sewers, and the people took their drinking water from them. In all of the cities I found wells not far from the seashore, and the doctors estimated that 50,000 houses had cisterns whose water was polluted in that way. The custom of burying the dead was another source of disease. The cemeteries were crowded, and great piles of skulls and other human bones were found in some of them. Uncle Sam has caused new cemeteries to be opened, and he has established in remote districts many new ones, where free burial is given to the poor.

Porto Rico has now its own health department, with an advisory board consisting of a health supervisor, a physician, a druggist, and a veterinarian. A great deal is being done to wipe out tuberculosis, and the general condition of the people is 100

per cent better than it has been before.

Automobile Roads Now Cover the Island.

Next to the hookworm, one of the biggest things Uncle Sam has done in Porto Rico has been in the good roads movement. He has started the work, and the people have furnished the money to do the business.

There is no part of the United States which has such a road development as has had Porto Rico since we took hold. At that time the island had 17 miles of good highways. These were built by the Spaniards and mainly for military purposes. They consisted of one long road across the mountains from the Caribbean Sea to the Atlantic, and some branch roads running here and there. These military roads were as good as any drive ways in the United States. They were as smooth as the floor, without pebbles or ruts, and they wound their way in easy slopes over the mountains. In some places they hung to the sides of the hills and in others they made innumerable horseshoe curves so that you could see the road above and below you. I went over that road in 1899 and I was told it had cost about \$25,000 a mile.

To-day you will find roads like that connecting the chief parts of Porto Rico, and you can go in an automobile all over the island. The roads have cost only \$10,000 a mile and they are now spending about \$500 per mile per annum to keep them in order. The aggregate length of the macadam roads of such that if they were placed end to end they would reach from New York almost to Chicago, and that would be a better automobile road than if it were composed of strips from the best roads of New England.

In addition to this wagon roads have been made in the mountains connecting with these automobile highways, and now trails have been cut so that transportation is so getting possible.

A great deal of the business of the country is now done by automobiles. There are more than 100 in use and more are added every day. There were something like a hundred new ones last year. There are regular lines of freight and passenger motor cars between the chief cities, and regular automobile buses run over the military road from San Juan to Ponce. As it is now, one can leave San Juan after breakfast in the morning and be at Ponce, on the southern side of the island, for lunch. It used to take one to get there in two days.

The New Steam Roads.

When I was in Porto Rico, at the close of the war, there was only one steam railway. This was made up of short strips running from San Juan around to Ponce, with numerous breaks. It was part of a system that had been planned to belt the island, but only bits of which had been built.

Since we have taken hold this road has been improved and extended. The breaks have been filled, and the steam cars now run clear along the northern and western ends of the island from San Juan to Ponce, and from there to the port of Guayama. This completes four-fifths of the circuit of the island, and, in addition, there are many short lines that connect the sugar plantations. A very little more track would give roads through all the coast lands of Porto Rico.

In 1893 the car service was miserable. The passenger coaches were lit-



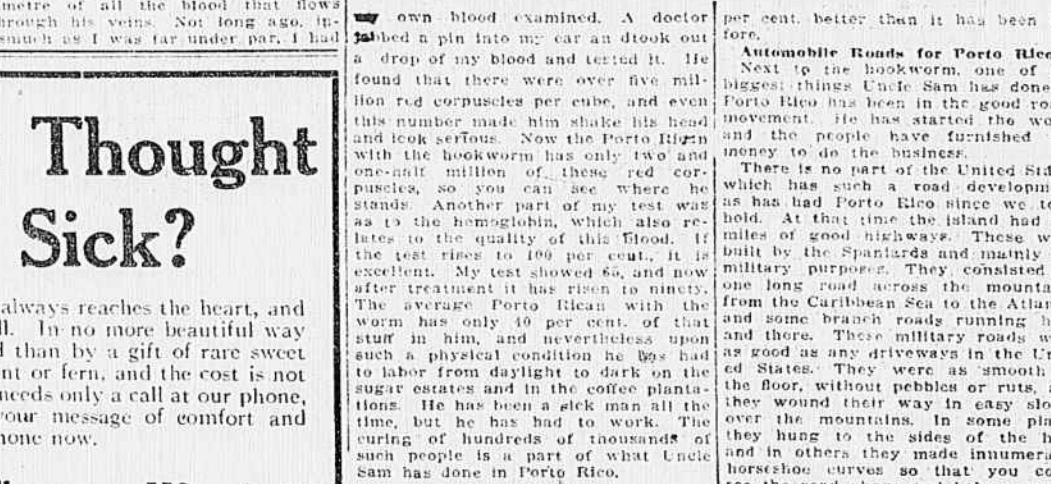
Porto Rico has nine large banks, with deposits of \$12,000,000. This is the American Colonial Bank, of San Juan. Its interior furnishings are of Italian marble and bronze.



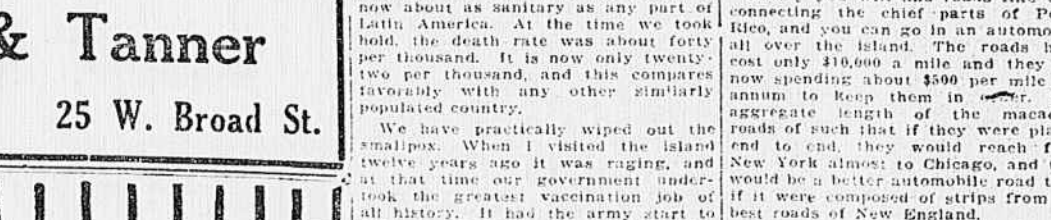
The new public market of San Juan, built of reinforced concrete. Many buildings of this construction are now going up.



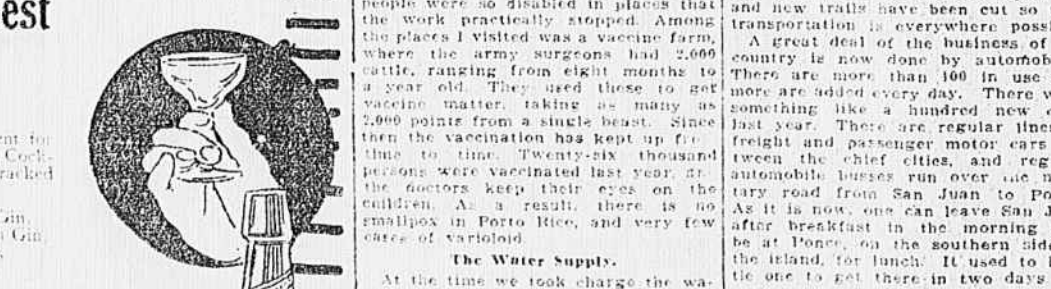
The new Comerio Dam, which furnishes electricity to light San Juan and other towns.



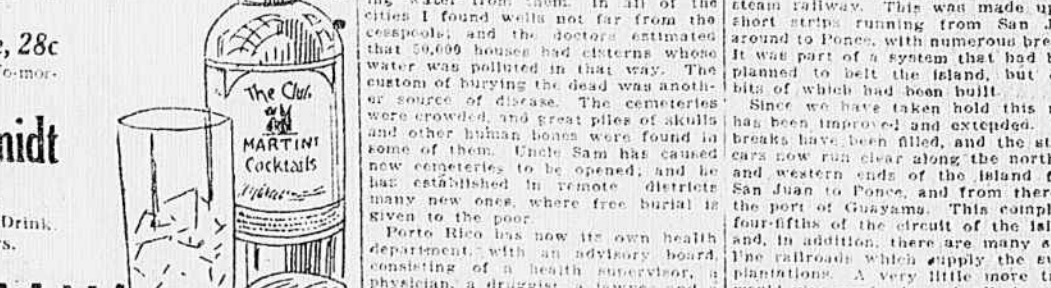
The new building on the left is a schoolhouse.



The new building on the left is a schoolhouse.



The new building on the left is a schoolhouse.



The new building on the left is a schoolhouse.



The new building on the left is a schoolhouse.

tle better than our box freight cars. It was a rare occasion when the dinky engine did not break down. To-day there are good American locomotives and comfortable passenger cars.

Steamships to Porto Rico.

Since the United States took hold of Porto Rico the steamship lines connecting with it have steadily improved. New ones have been added, and the island has now steamers for all parts of the world. The wharves of San Juan and Ponce are crowded with American goods. There are now twelve different lines which call at Porto Rico. The chief ones going to the United States are the New York and Porto Rico Steamship Line, the Red D Line and the Insular Line. The latter has three steamers which ply regularly between New York and San Juan. The Red D has five, which call at San Juan on their way to Venezuela, and the New York and Porto Rico Line has a weekly service, its boats leaving New York every Saturday and reaching Porto Rico Wednesday. The fare is \$40 or \$50. The Spanish Trans-Atlantic Company plies between Spain and Santo Domingo, calling at San Juan, and a French line goes from France to Haiti, calling at the same port. The Hamburg-American Line has boats to Porto Rico, and there are Italian and Cuban boats as well. One can go to Porto Rico from the United States two or three times every week.

Posts and Telegraphs.

The telegraphic and postal service of the island, which was very poor ten years ago, is now as good as that of any part of our country. The United States government manages the post-offices, and the telegraph system is under the government of Porto Rico, being directed by its Department of the Interior. There are thirty-seven telegraph stations, covering all the larger places, and these are connected by telephones with all the smaller towns. Messages are sent by telegraph and transmitted from the stations by telephone. The telephones are owned by private parties. The island has also a good cable service, connecting it with all parts of the world, and it has wireless telegraph stations maintained by the United States Navy. It has also street railways run by electricity, and San Juan and other towns are lighted by the power project of the Comerio Dam.

Porto Rico Pays Its Own Bills.

When a British colony pays its own bills it is considered a success. That is what Porto Rico does now. The total cost of the government and all the expenses of the island come out of the Porto Rican treasury, which is filled by Porto Rican taxes. The United States has no expense whatsoever, except the keeping of a regiment of troops, consisting altogether of five or six hundred, the privates of whom are Porto Ricans. The officers only are Americans.

The governing is done by the natives, with the exception of the governor-general and a limited number of officials appointed by the President. There is a Legislature, consisting of two houses, one of which, known as the Executive Council, is appointed by the President, and the other, the House of Delegates, is elected by the people. There are eleven members in the Executive Council, and thirty-five in the House of Delegates, and they make all the laws of the island. The thirty-five members are elected every two years from seven electoral districts. Each of the districts has five delegates. Both of these houses are now in session, the Assembly having convened the second Monday in January. It will sit sixty days. The Executive Council remains in session throughout the year, for it is necessary that it consider the appointments made by the Governor in order that they be valid according to law.

Justice in Porto Rico.

In the days of the Spaniards justice in Porto Rico was a matter of bargain and sale. The man who had the most money got the decision of the courts in his favor, and even to-day judges are still offered bribes. I heard of a case in which a woman the other day called upon the attorney-general and asked him just how much money it would take to get her son out of prison.

She said she had been saving for the past five years, or ever since he had committed manslaughter, and that she thought she had now enough to buy him out. It was hard for the attorney-

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general to make her see that money could not compensate for crime.

To-day the judicial system of Porto Rico is much like that of the United States. There are fifty-eight justices of the peace, but they cannot fine a man more than \$15 or imprison him for more than thirty days. Their jurisdiction is limited to violations of municipal ordinances and petty crimes. They are much like our police judges. There are also municipal courts, where suits are tried in which the rental does not exceed \$1,000. The officers of these are elected by popular vote, and each for a term of four years. Above these are the district courts, the prosecuting attorneys, of which are appointed by the Governor, and, higher still, the Supreme Court, composed of five judges appointed by the President. This court sits at San Juan, and it possesses general appellate jurisdiction over the island.

A Spanish Country Without Graft.

One of the most remarkable things in Porto Rico has been the elimination of graft. Under the former government everything was bribery and corruption. Nothing could be done without greasing the itching palms of the officials, and this was so even to the recording of deeds and all transfers of property. Everything was taxed, even to the smallest bit of furniture of a banana-roofed shack. The poor had no rights that the rich were bound to respect, and it cost money to get a hearing in the courts.

At the time we took hold there were 2,000 prisoners in the jails awaiting trial, and many of them did not know

the charges upon which they had been arrested. One man had been kept in prison for five months for stealing an empty bag, and another a year for stealing a chicken. A third prisoner, charged with stealing a hog, had been kept in jail a year awaiting his trial. The courts of Porto Rico then cost \$100,000 a year in salaries alone, and every official had a large allowance for writing materials.

To-day all the accounts of the island pass through the hands of auditors selected by our Treasury Department, and every cent must be satisfactorily accounted for. This is so of all branches of the government, and it is impossible for any of the public money to be spent otherwise than as laid down by the law.

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APPOMATTOX

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)
Appomattox, Va., January 20.—Mrs. J. W. Flood, with her son Joel, returned home this week from Norfolk, where she had been visiting friends and relatives.

L. W. Purdum, of Danville, Va., has been visiting George Purdum this week.

Miss Effie Atwood has been visiting in Lynchburg. Mrs. Atwood and her mother, Mrs. J. R. Atwood, will leave early next week for an extended visit South, first to Birmingham, then Yazoo City and thence to Jacksonville, Fla.

Mrs. J. R. Atwood entertained the Women's Missionary Society on Wednesday.

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